

E-BOOK OF EXTENDED ABSTRACT

THE 14TH INTERNATIONAL INVENTION, INNOVATION & DESIGN COMPETITION 2025



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DESIGN COMPETITION 2025

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BLOSSOM OF IDENTITY: STUDIO-BASED INNOVATION IN YIXING PURPLE CLAY CERAMIC CARVING

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ABSTRACT

This design innovation explores the development of a culturally expressive and functionally enhanced drinking vessel inspired by Malaysia's national flower, the hibiscus. It is crafted using traditional Chinese purple clay (Zisha) from Yixing, a city in Jiangsu Province renowned for its centuries-old tea ware tradition. The project aims to merge symbolic aesthetics with artisanal material heritage to serve modern, wellness-oriented users. The proposed design fosters emotional resonance, cultural pride, and enhanced beverage experiences by integrating floral motifs and organic forms into a traditional tea ware medium. The study applies a design-thinking methodology guided by the Ishikawa model, supported by material analysis and user-centred design principles. Notably, the project highlights the exclusiveness of Yixing Zisha tea ware, which is globally recognised for its artisanal craftsmanship, mineral-rich clay composition, and unique porous structure that enhances flavour over time. The resulting product concept reflects identity, wellness, and sustainable values, while bridging traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design narratives.

Keyword: Yixing Purple Clay, Ceramic, Tea ware, Hibiscus, Cultural Integration

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional purple clay tea ware, or Zisha, has long been revered in Chinese culture for its functional properties, including excellent heat retention, breathable clay body, and aroma-enhancing capabilities (Chen, 2014). Zisha is a unique type of clay that originates specifically from Yixing, a city in Jiangsu Province, China, which has become internationally renowned for its purple clay tea ware tradition (Xiang, 2018). However, the form and motifs of such vessels remain rooted in historical and cultural norms. At the same time, modern design calls for deeper integration of cultural identity, sustainability, and aesthetic symbolism, especially in the context of lifestyle products like teacups (Liu & Zhao, 2024). The hibiscus, Bunga Raya, is Malaysia's national flower and represents unity, beauty, and national pride. This project proposes a new teacup design that combines the traditional utility of purple clay with the symbolic and visual qualities of the hibiscus, offering a meaningful, user-centred product for contemporary users. The Ishikawa model was used to map critical factors influencing the design, such as material constraints, user expectations, cultural symbolism, functional requirements, and aesthetic coherence.

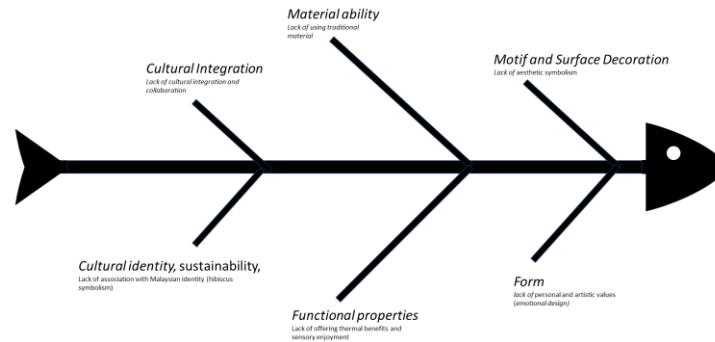


Figure 1 Ishikawa Diagram of the Problem Statements

2. METHODOLOGY

The study uses a qualitative design-thinking approach guided by the Ishikawa (fishbone) model to identify and structure the contributing factors in the design process. The methodology comprises the following phases (Brown, 2009).

- a. Visual Study: This phase involves brainstorming and data collection on existing tea ware, cultural symbols, and user preferences. A literature and image-based visual analysis was conducted to gather inspiration and contextual grounding (Hu et al., 2019).
- b. Visualisation Concept: Translating collected ideas into rough form concepts, using sketches and digital mood boards to establish a visual language aligned with hibiscus motifs and Zisha characteristics.
- c. Idea Development: Refining selected concepts based on design feasibility, material compatibility, and user values. Cultural narratives and ergonomic aspects were integrated during this stage.
- d. Exploratory Drawing: Multiple sketches and digital iterations were created to explore form, handle options, surface treatments, and symbolic integration.
- e. Prototyping: Physical and digital mockups were produced to evaluate usability, visual appeal, and alignment with traditional purple clay forming techniques. Feedback from target users was collected and reviewed for design refinement.

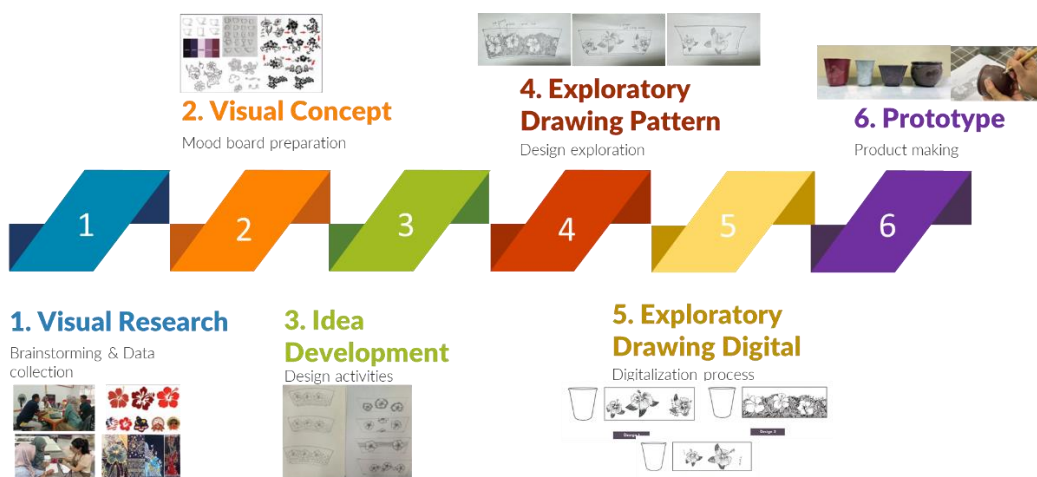


Figure 2 Design Development Process Based on Studio-Based Innovation

3. FINDINGS

Cultural Integration: Users responded positively to the floral symbolism, associating the hibiscus with Malaysian identity and warmth.

Material Response: Purple clay effectively maintained beverage temperature and offered a natural, earthy tactile experience that complemented the floral theme.

Design Reception: Users appreciated the organic form and subtle petal-like details, making the product feel more personal and artistic.

Market Potential: Responses indicated a strong niche appeal among wellness enthusiasts, tea hobbyists, and those valuing handmade craftsmanship and cultural narrative.



Figure 3 Hibiscus Carving on a Yixing Purple Clay Ceramic Product

4. CONCLUSION

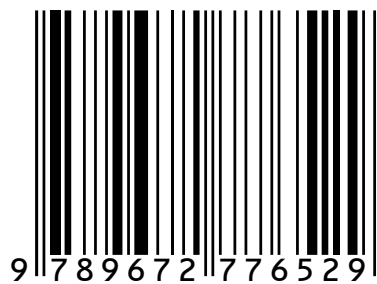
The hibiscus-inspired purple clay cup successfully bridges traditional craftsmanship with modern design values. It offers functional performance in beverage insulation and sensory experience while evoking national pride and emotional connection. This design demonstrates how material heritage and symbolic aesthetics can coexist in a single product, creating meaningful user engagement. The project opens new possibilities for localised identity expression in everyday objects and supports the growing trend of cultural sustainability in design.

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